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Over 250 Attend Final Salisbury-Rowan READS! Event held at Cleveland Elementary School

Cleveland Community Offers Strong Attendance for Reading Initiative

Salisbury, NC _August 12, 2009 – The City of Salisbury and Rowan County five-week summer reading enrichment program entitled, “Read to Your Child Days: Salisbury-Rowan READS!” concluded this week in Cleveland at the Cleveland Elementary School. The event site was changed due to inclement weather forecast for the afternoon event. A crowd of over 250 children and adults attended the learning initiative and free-book-giveaway on Wednesday August 12, from 5 pm - 7 pm. The program, which has traveled to a different location in Rowan County each week, was created to promote reading to children, encourage children to obtain a free library card, and to provide a free book to all children in attendance. The events offered free refreshments, information, giveaways, story-time by local government leaders, emergency service vehicle displays, arts and crafts for children, and a variety of exciting door prizes including a Nintendo Wii. Over 2,300 citizens have attended the five-week reading program.

Of the more than 250 citizens in attendance at the Cleveland event, an estimated 160 were children. Cleveland Mayor Jim Brown and the Cleveland Commissioners hosted the community event. Reading sessions by government officials took place in the kindergarten area of the elementary school. In addition to Mayor Brown, Commissioner Danny Gabriel, Commissioner Pat Phifer, Commissioner John Steele, and Cleveland Police Chief David Allen took turns reading to children during story-time. Cleveland Elementary Principal Becky Kepley-Lee and other local educators also shared stories with children. Mayor Susan Kluttz of Salisbury, Rowan County Commission Chair Carl Ford, Rowan County Commissioners Jon Barber and Tina Hall, and Cleveland Commissioners Frankie Fleming-Adkins and John Bradford were also in attendance and offered support for the event by emceeding the festivities, reading with children and participating in the door prize activities. Lark Staley of Salisbury was the winner of the Nintendo Wii System. Lark’s sister Sage is a rising third-grader at Cleveland Elementary.

Mayor Jim Brown shares, “This is government doing what government should do. Everybody needs a little help and sometimes it nice to help put on smile on everyone’s face.” Mayor Brown emphasizes the importance of literacy and continues, “If you can’t read in this society, it’s hard to exist. This event is a wonderful opportunity to do something good for our citizens. I would like to offer special thanks to Cleveland Elementary Principal Becky Kepley Lee, West Middle Principal Nancy Barkemeyer and all of the individuals who volunteered and made this event so successful.” Mayor Brown

also thanked the City of Salisbury and Rowan County for their commitment to children and for providing the opportunity for local communities to partner in the reading initiative.

Principal Kepley Lee graciously provided the elementary school as an alternate site when thunderstorms and severe rain threatened the afternoon event. Kepley Lee, who volunteered for the event was excited with the turn-out and shared, "this is an excellent way to promote reading and a great way to get kids pumped up about starting back to school." West Middle Principal Barkemeyer, also a volunteer, echoed Kepley Lee's sentiments and noted the importance of books to children. "Books open a lot of doors for students and provide knowledge and offer an opportunity to use one's imagination. This is a wonderful event."

In attendance at the event were numerous emergency, rescue service providers, and police car displays from Cleveland. Additional displays included Project Safe Neighborhoods, Smart Start Rowan, Census 2010, and Rowan Recycling featuring Rowan County Recycling Coordinator Lori Swaim. Craft areas for children included face painting, tattoo art, bead working, and coloring stations.

Rowan County is made up of nineteen departments that are committed to providing a wealth of services to County residents and businesses. For more information regarding Rowan County local government, please visit www.rowancountync.gov on the World Wide Web. The City of Salisbury is an equal opportunity employer with over 180 different job classifications and 400 full time positions. For more information regarding the City of Salisbury and its services and departments, please visit us on the web at www.salisburync.gov.

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